

**OVT-007**      **On Amending G-6.04e.to Require a Two-Thirds Majority Vote to Amend the Constitution—From the Presbytery of the Foothills.**

**Source:**      Presbytery                      **Event:**              222nd General Assembly (2016)

**Committee:** No Assignment      **Sponsor:**      Foothills Presbytery

**Topic:**              Unassigned                      **Type:**              General Assembly Full Consideration

<http://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=5293>

Recommendation

**The Presbytery of the Foothills overtures the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to do the following:**

1. Direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote:

Shall G-6.04e be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

"e.      The Stated Clerk receives written advice that a proposed amendment to the Book of Order has received the affirmative votes of a ~~majority~~ *two-thirds majority* of all the presbyteries. ~~The proposed amendment so approved shall become effective one year following the adjournment of the assembly transmitting the proposed amendment.~~ *The proposed amendment, if approved and enacted by the next General Assembly, shall become effective at the close of that General Assembly meeting."*

2. Engage the following approval process:

The thusly amended *Book of Order*, along with whatever other *Book of Order* amendments approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016), will be sent out to presbyteries for a vote, and upon achieving a two-thirds majority, the 223rd General Assembly (2018) shall vote to ratify this change.

Rationale

Constitutions are social documents that assert and affirm the core beliefs, values, principles, and appropriate rules to express the given identity of a people. As such, constitutions are core social identity documents and should be stable across extended periods of time. In our American political experience this has been the case. The United States has only amended the Constitution a total of twenty-seven times across its near two and a half centuries (and only 17 times since the original first ten amendments).

In the formation of the PC(USA), the church chose to dilute its understanding of Constitution by creating a *Book of Order* that was a hybrid of a constitution and manual of operations. In doing so the democratic principle ("majority rule") was raised above the constitutional principle ("supermajority to amend"). This choice led to not only a loss of a stable understanding of our core identity, but it also promoted factionalism within the denomination. The passage of this amendment will appropriately restore stability to our core identity document, reassert the constitutional principle, and aid the church in regaining an appropriate understanding of engaging in patient discernment of the Will of Christ for His Church.